

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended) A rotary drill bit for penetrating earth strata, the drill bit comprising: an elongate bit body having an axial forward end; and a monolithic hard insert being affixed to the bit body at the axial forward end thereof, ~~and the said~~ hard insert ~~presenting at least three~~ having a trio of symmetric lobes, each said lobe having a discrete stepped leading cutting edges for cutting the earth strata wherein each said at least three leading cutting edges is stepped edge, each said stepped leading cutting edge having a straight upper step, a transition portion connected to said upper step and a straight lower step connected to said transition portion, said upper step of said leading cutting edge having an upper leading surface, said upper leading surface disposed at a rake angle with the vertical of between about five degrees to about negative fifteen degrees, said lower step and said transition portion of said leading cutting edge having a lower leading surface disposed at a rake angle with the vertical of between about zero degrees to about negative ten degrees.

2. (cancelled).

3. (currently amended) The rotary drill bit of claim 2 1 wherein ~~each leading cutting edge of the said upper step and each leading cutting edge of the said lower step on each leading cutting edge~~ are parallel.

4. (currently amended) The rotary drill bit of claim 2 3 wherein ~~both said leading cutting edge of the lower step and said leading cutting edge of the of upper step on each~~ said leading cutting edge are oriented at an angle of about ~~20~~ 5 to 35 degrees with respect to the horizontal.

5. (currently amended) The rotary drill bit of claim 2 1 wherein a said cutting edge transition portion is positioned between ~~the said lower step cutting edge and the said upper step cutting edge the transition portion~~ rises a vertical height of generally between 1/16-1/8 inches.

6. (original) The rotary drill bit of claim 1 wherein the rotary drill bit has a central longitudinal axis passing through the hard insert, the bit body having a peripheral surface, and each one of the leading cutting edges for cutting the earth strata begins at a point radially outward of the central axis of the hard insert and extends in a direction away from the central axis.

7. (cancelled).

8. (currently amended) The rotary drill bit of claim 6 wherein each of the said stepped leading cutting edges has a radially inward upper step and a radially outward lower step.

9. (original) The rotary drill bit of claim 8 wherein each of said upper steps have a length of generally between 1/8-1/4 inches.

10. (cancelled).

11. (cancelled).

12. (cancelled).

13. (currently amended) The rotary drill bit of claim ~~2~~ 1 wherein ~~the~~ said upper step of each said leading cutting edge has a top surface relief angle of about ~~30~~ 15 to 40 degrees, said transition portion of each said leading cutting edge has a top surface relief angle of 5 to 30 degrees and ~~the~~ said lower step of each said leading cutting edge has a top surface relief angle of about ~~21~~ 5 to 30 degrees.

14. (cancelled).

15. (cancelled).

16. (cancelled).

17. (cancelled).

18. (previously cancelled)

19. (cancelled).

20. (cancelled).

21. (cancelled).

22. (previously cancelled).

23. (cancelled).

24. (previously cancelled).

25. (currently amended) The hard ~~member~~ insert of claim 23 1 wherein each said lobe has the hard insert ~~further including~~ a side clearance cutting edge ~~for cutting the earth strata~~ corresponding to each one of the said leading cutting edges ~~for cutting the earth strata~~.

26. (cancelled).

27. (cancelled).

28. (cancelled).

29. (cancelled).

30. (cancelled).

31. (cancelled).

32. (cancelled).

33. (cancelled).

34. (cancelled).

35. (cancelled).

36. (previously cancelled).

37. (cancelled).

38. (cancelled).

39. (cancelled).